

Representative's Report

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In response to the draft environmental impact statement on Mineral King, released by the Forest Service early this year as a result of our lawsuit, the Sierra Club filed a detailed critique.

The fundamental problem with the DEIS is its vagueness. "Where the plan exists only as a concept, the detailed analysis of environmental impact in this ecologically fragile area, required by the National Environmental Policy Act, cannot be performed," we said.

"It is not sufficient to rely on promises that such analysis will be performed some time in the future, after permits have been issued. Environmental impact analysis must be performed before a decision is made to proceed with the project. In order for such analysis to proceed the plan must be more specific."

One of the major defects of the DEIS is its failure to adequately discuss the effect of the proposed development on Sequoia National Park.

The impact on the park promises to be substantial, especially during the summer, when the Forest Service is planning for as many as 10,000 people at one time in the valley and surrounding areas. Backcountry use would increase substantially due to greater accessibility through proposed ski lifts, which would border the park.

The impact statement does not develop adequate provisions for the protection of the Giant Sequoias. "Removing any Giant Sequoias or encroaching on their potential habitat is always lamentable," we charged, "but destroying them for **nonpark** purposes is inconsistent with the park established for their preservation and with California law."

Another failure is lack of sufficient discussion of the development's impact on the Mineral King deer herd for which this National Game Refuge was established in the first place.

In the discussion of economic impacts, we pointed out a major flaw: "The statement assumes that there was a great unmet demand among Southern California skiers. However, using the Forest Service's own figures, it is possible to calculate a surplus facilities supply **WITHOUT** development of Mineral King."

Even assuming that an unmet skier demand did exist, it is obvious

from even the scanty cost figures in the draft statement that only the demands of the very affluent will be met by this development. Projected total costs for a week for two in Mineral King run to approximately \$600.

In addition, access costs to Mineral King would be so high that expenses for weekend vacations would be prohibitive.

The concessionaire would have a virtual monopoly on accommodations within the resort itself and has designed transportation barriers which would severely limit the feasibility of accommodations elsewhere. It would be possible for skiers to stay in towns outside the valley and be transported to facilities via a proposed cog railway. However, how many skiers would want to pay over \$5.00 a day round trip fare and spend three hours on a cog railway vying for space with others who want to arrive at the slopes within an hour before opening?

With regard to user demand, the Forest Service has analysed skier demand but has failed to analyze demand for wilderness use, which is increasing and, in fact, exceeds skier demand.

There are many other serious problems with the DEIS, such as incomplete discussion of water and energy demands of the proposed development.

But while we wait to see if the final EIS corrects these inadequacies, we cannot sit back and forget about Mineral King. There is an important task to be accomplished: getting the Congress to pass legislation adding Mineral King to Sequoia National Park, which surrounds it on three sides.

This legislation is long overdue and has widespread public support. I personally have been overwhelmed by the extent of that support, particularly when I spoke in Visalia in March.

But to get the needed legislation through the Congress we need the help of every person concerned about the fate of Mineral King. That means you must write your representative in the House and Senators Tunney and Cranston, emphasizing that this is the year to give Mineral King the protection it so badly needs.

Let's make history in 1975 by preserving this small part of our natural heritage.